



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

July 28, 2008

H.R. 1847 **National Trails System Willing Seller Act**

As ordered reported by the House Committee on Natural Resources on July 23, 2008

H.R. 1847 would amend the National Trails System Act to allow the federal government to purchase land from willing sellers for eight of the 25 national trails currently in the system. Under current law, federal agencies are not authorized to spend funds to acquire land or other property interests for eight national trails that are outside of existing federal areas, such as national forests or parks. (An exception to this prohibition is that one site in each state crossed by each trail may be acquired for an interpretive site.)

The costs of implementing H.R. 1847 are uncertain because the federal agencies that administer the national trails have not completed land protection plans for most of the trails that would be affected by the legislation. CBO expects that relatively little land along the 16,000 miles composing the eight trails would be acquired because most land can probably be protected in other ways, as it is for most other trails in the system. Under the bill, total acquisition costs could be significant, however, because some of the longest trails would probably require larger areas to be purchased. For example, land acquisition for multistate trails such as the 3,200-mile North Country National Scenic Trail could cost over \$100 million, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts. For some of the shorter trails, especially those located primarily on state or federal land, costs would be much lower. In any case, all acquisition funding would be subject to future appropriations and would be spent over a period of several years. This estimate is based on information provided by the National Park Service and the Forest Service, which administer most of the national trails affected by the bill.

Enacting H.R. 1847 would not affect direct spending or revenues. The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

On August 3, 2007, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for S. 169, the National Trails System Willing Seller Act, as ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on July 25, 2007. S. 169 and H.R. 1847 are very similar. The cost of implementing H.R. 1847 could be less than that of S. 169 because the House bill includes

one fewer trail (the Iditarod National Historic Trail in Alaska), but CBO estimates that the difference in costs would be small because the Alaska trail is located primarily on public land that would not need to be purchased.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Deborah Reis. The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.